

REMARKS

Reconsideration and allowance of the instant application are respectfully requested. Claims 1-27, 29-30, and 32-33 stand rejected under 35 USC 102(b) as anticipated by Simonetti (U.S. Patent 5,295,261).

Claims 1, 4 and 29 were amended to remove the term "category" which had been inadvertently included as a result of a translation error. Claim 27 was amended to correct antecedent basis.

In addition to the arguments presented in our response filed June 23, 2006, hereby incorporated by reference in its entirety, applicant submits the following.

Simonetti discloses a method in which city/district distribution centers, having stocked goods or merchandise, are selected by traversing the hierarchical tree shown in Fig. 2C from lower nodes to higher nodes. Namely, a merchandise distribution route is decided by an address of a customer or an address for delivery.

The instant claims provide for distribution support equipment configured with a computer system, customer-side equipment, distributor-side equipment, and supplier-side equipment. The computer allows communication between the customers', distributors' and suppliers' equipment. A database stores registered customer IDs, distributors, suppliers, and respective merchandise distribution routes through which each of plural sorts of merchandise ordered by each of the customers is delivered to the customer; the merchandise distribution routes being determined by the distributors and suppliers selected; wherein respective customer IDs and product numbers are linked according to predetermined settings. (These settings are not based on the customer's address.)

When an order signal is received from a customer for a plurality of merchandise, the database is accessed. The database provides the information stored for distribution of each of the plurality of merchandise including a merchandise distribution route. That is, the distribution of each type of merchandise is determined based on the information stored for the customer based on its customer ID and information stored for each merchandise number for each of the plurality of merchandise included in the ordering signal.

In contrast to Simonetti, the method of the instant claims does not obtain information pertaining to the city or district where the customer resides and then select a city/district distribution center that ships the merchandise to a city or district. That is, the instant claims do not rely on a hierachal system where the merchandise is stocked at an upper area distribution center. Instead the merchandise distribution route is specified without proceeding through a hierachal chain providing a lower load to the claimed system.

In addition, the instant claims automatically orders each of the plurality of merchandise from the distributor and supplier on the merchandise distribution route based on the customer ID and type of merchandise ordered. This allows the supplier or the distributor to provide the merchandise demanded by customer promptly.

Simonetti's advantage relates only to physical distribution (in view of distance or time). The instant claims, on the other hand, can provide a convenient distributor for a customer in an after-sales service and a convenient distributor for a manufacturer when specific merchandise is selected for distribution (for example, a distributor setting may require the ability to carefully handle fragile merchandise).

Simonetti does not teach each and every element of the instant claims and therefore cannot anticipate the instant claims. Withdrawal of the instant rejections is requested.

CONCLUSION

In view of the above amendments and remarks, withdrawal of the rejections and issuance of a Notice of Allowance is requested.

Respectfully submitted,



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Date: November 28, 2006

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